

SECURITY INFORMATION

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

8 July 1952

STAFF MEMORANDUM NO. 254

SUBJECT: The Yalu Bombings

A. Effectiveness of the Raids

1. On 23 June the four principal hydroelectric systems of North Korea (Suiho, Kyosen, Chosen, and Fusen) were attacked by 342 UN fighter-bombers. These raids, together with follow-up attacks, knocked out an estimated 90 percent of North Korea's former power capacity. (See Annex for detailed evaluation of damage inflicted.)

2. Power for North Korea must now be supplied by one insignificant hydroelectric plant and several small independent thermal plants. Pyongyang radio broadcasts have been sporadic since the bombings, and it is probable that communication facilities as well as most mining and industrial activities in North Korea have been seriously affected by the almost complete power blackout.

3. The effect of the bombings upon Manchurian industry is even more serious, since there was already a power shortage in Manchuria. Dairen and Port Arthur, with some of the largest industrial plants in China, have been obtaining power from the Suiho plant since the power plant at Dairen was dismantled and removed to the USSR. Mukden, Antung, and Anshan also probably received some power from Suiho.

4. The damage probably does not directly affect the USSR's power supply in the Far East, since there are probably no major power lines in existence between North Korea and Vladivostok. Communist operation of the airfield at Antung will probably not be materially affected, for the field has two or three stand-by power plants available.

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B. The Failure of the Communist Air Forces to React

5. There is no agreed explanation of the failure of the Communists to offer air opposition to the UN attacks. Possible explanations in the order of probability, are:

- a. The raids escaped detection and completely surprised the enemy. The fact that the fighter-bombers came in at low altitude and struck fifteen targets simultaneously lends some credence to this view.
- b. The enemy is conserving his aircraft for a future offensive. A recent decrease in the number of sorties flown by the CCAF from the already low level of the first half of the year may indicate that the Communists are attempting to bring their aircraft to a high state of readiness and, at the same time, to conserve their fuel stockpiles. The CCAF may have remained uncommitted in order to maintain this high state of preparedness and to save aircraft from possible loss.
- c. The raid caught the Communists in the midst of a staging operation. The Communist planes in adjacent Manchuria may have been manned by fledgling Chinese and/or Soviet pilots newly moved into the area. The risk of large-scale loss may have kept the air force on the ground.
- d. The agreement believed signed by Peiping and Moscow in February 1950 for Soviet air assistance to Communist China may have run out in early 1952. This would explain the sharp decline in Communist air opposition since the first of the year.
- e. The CCAF was uninstructed for such an emergency and could not take the initiative without the approval of higher authorities. This is regarded as improbable.

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f. The 200 "planes" seen at Antung were dummies. This is regarded as almost certainly fallacious.

C. Communist Reactions

6. North Korean reaction was immediate. While avoiding direct reference to the Yalu bombings, General Nam Il clearly had them in mind when he angrily denounced the US at Panmunjom the day following the raids, stating that US operations "outside the conference tent" were an act of provocation. Nam Il's added statement that such acts could not force a change in the Communist position at the armistice talks has set a pattern for Communist propaganda reaction.

7. Peiping's reaction to the bombings has been angry and intense, suggesting that Communist China was hard hit by this sudden loss of power. After an initial four-day period of ignoring the bombing, Chinese Communist broadcasts have since discussed the raids at great length; pointing out that the Americans, having been defeated in Korea, have taken a number of steps (e.g., germ warfare, POW atrocities, etc.) designed to wreck the negotiations and undermine peace in Asia and that the Yalu raids are only the latest step in this series. Peiping evidently intends to make the Yalu bombings another cause celebre, since it is already organizing "mass protests." There have been no implied threats of retaliation; Peiping has thus far stated only that the Communists cannot be coerced and that US crimes will not go unpunished.

8. Moscow first mentioned the attacks three days after they occurred in a Home Service radio broadcast which stated that "a power station" on the Yalu had been bombed, and that a hospital nearby had also been hit. Subsequent Moscow broadcasts have thus far been merely news items reports and have all played down the significance both of the plants and the bombings. The Soviet press has confined itself to reprinting non-Communist reactions throughout the world which were critical of the bombings. The USSR has not mentioned the Yalu bombings at the UN.

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D. Non-Communist Reactions since the Bombings

9. Non-Communist opinion has varied concerning the wisdom of the bombings and whether or not they were executed within existing UN policy in Korea. However, there has been general criticism of the US for not consulting other powers before taking action which might expand the Far Eastern war. This latter criticism has been voiced by Eden, Nehru, and Yoshida.

E. Probable Consequences of the Yalu Bombings

10. These raids will seriously curtail industry in North Korea and Manchuria, and will, at least temporarily, directly affect Communist military capabilities in Korea.

11. The bombings will probably not, in themselves, lead to a CCAF retaliatory offensive, or seriously alter existing Communist military plans for Korea.

12. Communist propaganda will continue its program of linking the Yalu bombings to germ warfare and other US "atrocities," and will attempt to exploit widespread non-Communist uneasiness over the alleged US proclivity to act unilaterally.

13. The effect of the Yalu bombing upon the armistice talks is difficult to assess. The success of the raids may have increased US bargaining pressure, but this may have been somewhat offset by the added rift the Yalu incident has brought in US relations with the non-Communist world. The net effect, therefore, may be small, and existing Communist policies vis-a-vis an armistice may not be radically changed as a result alone of the Yalu raids.

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ANNEX

USAF AND USN EVALUATIONS OF DAMAGE INFILCTED ON ELECTRIC POWER  
GENERATING INSTALLATIONS IN NORTH KOREA (25 JUNE)

1. SUIHO

USAF: power plant appears to be out of operation; 2 large transformers and generating plant demolished; considerable damage inflicted to transformer switch yards; approximately 50 bomb craters in immediate vicinity of plant.

2. KYOSEN

No. 1

USAF: 2 penstocks, transformers, and switchyard damaged; 30° object believed to be turbine blown from power house into river; 3 anti-aircraft artillery (AA) positions damaged.

USN: unserviceable, 60% destroyed; turbine building 30% structural damage; transformer and switching equipment destroyed; major damage to switch yard, penstock, and other damage obscured by smoke.

No. 2

USAF: major damage to transformer; control house damaged; power house damaged; 2 hits on turbine building; switch house destroyed; hits on high voltage lines; direct hits on penstocks causing heavy flow of water; surge tank damaged; 6 gun positions silenced.

USN: control house gutted with 30% structural damage; turbine building probably 25% superficial damage with possible minor damage to turbines; minor damage to 1 penstock; probably 75% damage to transformer and switch yard.

No. 3

USAF: power house believed destroyed; major damage to transformer; fires in switch yard; 2 penstocks broken;

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major damage to control house; AA positions in area strafed, damage unknown.

USN: unserviceable with turbine building 60% destroyed; estimate major damage to all turbines; control building gutted with 50% structural damage; transformer and switch yard destroyed; all penstocks damaged.

No. 4

USAF: transformers and electrical gallery destroyed; penstock and power house damaged; unknown damage to AA positions.

USN: 75% destruction; turbine building gutted with 75% structural damage; probable major damage to turbine units; 20% structural and 100% superficial damage to control house; transformer and switching group partially destroyed; 2 penstocks cut.

3. CHOSEN

No. 1

USAF: 1 power house possibly destroyed; 1 automatic weapons (AW) position possibly destroyed; 1 transformer damaged.

USN: no apparent damage to power house; 1 penstock cut; light damage to transformer and switch yard.

No. 2

USAF: 7 hits on power house; 2 buildings destroyed; 1 transformer damaged.

USN: power house slight exterior damage; interior damage by fire, extent undetermined; 2 penstocks cut; slight damage to transformer and switch yard.

No. 3

USAF: 1 surge tank destroyed; 1 power house destroyed; fires in switch yard and transformer area; 2 sluice gates broken; 1 pumping station damaged; 10 direct hits on power plant and 2 direct hits on generator building.

USN: power house major damage; penstock, transformer, and switch yard destroyed.

No. 4

USAF: generator house completely destroyed; 50% destruction to transformer yard; minor damage to buildings of the northwest generator house; 2 buildings destroyed and 4 buildings sustained superficial damage in the housing area of the east generator house; 1 power plant destroyed;

USN: power house and transformer destroyed; switch yard damaged; penstocks damaged.

4. FUSEN

No. 1

USAF: power house destroyed; major damage to transformer yard; 3 penstocks cut.

USN: turbine building destroyed; probable major damage to turbine equipment; control building probable superficial damage from near misses; transformer and switching equipment 75% destroyed.

No. 2

USAF: unknown damage to penstocks; power house roof caved in; transformer yard destroyed; 9 AW positions silenced.

USN: turbine building and control house and transformer destroyed; probable major damage to turbines; 50% structural damage to spillway building adjacent to plant.

No. 3

USAF: transformer yard appear destroyed; 1 power plant reported destroyed.

USN: inoperative; control building gutted; 30% structural damage; transformer and switching equipment all probably destroyed; penstocks damaged.

No. 4

USAF: superficial damage to the generator building but no apparent structural damage; other buildings showed considerable structural damage; 2 direct hits on power plant.

USN: heavy damage with smoke preventing assessment.